

CALIFORNIA FORESTS

Can we stop the breakup of California's forests?

When forests are forests
no longer

Rethinking regulations

New lights in the redwoods

More development,
more roads and more
environmental impact



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Cover:

When forestland is fragmented, certain ecological attributes cease to exist. Sustaining a viable forestry industry is far better for California's environment than the alternative of converting private timberlands into subdivisions and strip malls.





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1215 K Street, Suite 1830
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 444-6592 fax: (916) 444-0170
web site: www.foresthealth.org
e-mail: cfa@foresthealth.org

Publisher

David A. Bischel

Managing Editor

Bob Mion

California Forest Products Commission

Production Manager

Sophia Runne

Advertising

Jeanette Grimm

Membership/Subscriptions

Jeanette Grimm

Design & Layout

CMB Design Partners



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Association**

Officers

Roger Burch, *Chairman*

Charlie Brown, *Vice Chair*

David A. Bischel, *President*

Dee Sanders, *Secretary*

Lloyd Bradshaw, *Treasurer*

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President's Message

A FRESH LOOK FOR THE MAGAZINE FORESTS MAY LOOK DIFFERENT SOON, TOO



David A. Bischel
President, CFA

Welcome to the new look of *California Forests* magazine! Beginning with this issue, we are ushering in a new design to our publication in an effort to appeal to an ever-increasing readership. Our goal is to address timely forestry issues in a contemporary format. We hope you like our fresh look.

Increasingly, our forests are taking on a new look, too.

California's booming population and a steady stream of urbanites seeking peace and quiet in the country are having a significant ecological impact on our mountains and forests.

These forest newcomers bring with them a jumble of contradictory attitudes and beliefs. Many build expensive new houses with wood products, yet insist that cutting trees is bad; or at least that it be done "not in my backyard."

Ironically, cosmopolitan refugees seem (subconsciously) to have more tolerance for land uses that fragment and urbanize forests than for the types of management practices that have maintained the landscape for generations. Seeking to be part of what is "natural," they are changing California's wildlands more drastically than the chainsaw ever did.

Of course forest management activities – be they planting or harvesting trees, thinning fire-prone thickets or trucking logs to a sawmill – can have environmental impacts, positive and negative. Still, the potential negative environmental impact of even the most environmentally insensitive forest practices do not compare with what happens when a piece of ground ceases to be a working forest, forever.

Urbanization, after all, is the ultimate land conversion. When you add permanent structures, pavement, vehicles, wires, pipelines and fences to a forest environment, certain ecological attributes cease to exist.

Consider the issue of chemical use, for example. A forest landowner may use herbicides to help establish a young crop of trees once or twice during that timber stand's first decade. After the seedlings reach sapling stage and are free of competing brush, there is typically no chemical use for 40-60 years. Contrast this with the cumulative annual impacts of chemical weed control and fertilizers used in maintaining the average suburban lawn several times every year.

Or what about the water quality impacts of concentrated runoff from paved areas into storm drains compared to the mitigated, short-term impacts of even the most intensive forest management practices? What about wildlife habitat, exotic and invasive species, the ability to see stars at night? There is really no comparison – forestry is better for the natural environment and values we care about than conversion to light industry, shopping complexes, vineyards or subdivisions.

This is not to suggest that growth is evil and must be stopped. But we must strike a proper balance between development and conservation, and consider how good-intentioned regulations may drive open spaces further away from communities.

The greatest threat to our natural heritage isn't the effort to responsibly manage our forests to produce the wood products that we use every day, but the permanent conversion of agricultural and forestland to development. Proactive forest management may just be the smartest and most natural defense we have against uncontrolled growth in our forests. ■

Contributors



Dale Geldert

is the director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. Prior to his current role, Mr. Geldert served as fire chief and deputy city manager for the City of Oceanside. He has also held positions as a state forest ranger and fire chief for the County of Merced. **(Story on Page 18)**



Doug LaMalfa

was first elected to the California State Assembly in 2002 to represent the people of the 2nd Assembly District, proudly serving: Redding, Yuba City, Red Bluff, Anderson, Shasta Lake, Yreka, Corning, Orland, Live Oak and Willows. **(Story on Page 21)**



Constance Best

is the managing director of The Pacific Forest Trust, based in Santa Rosa, Calif. She is the principal author of *America's Private Forests: Status and Stewardship* (Island Press 2001). The Pacific Forest Trust is dedicated to sustaining private forests for all the public benefits they provide. **(Story on Page 8)**



Pete Cafferata

is a hydrologist with 23 years experience at the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. Mr. Cafferata is the lead staff person for the Monitoring Study Group, and oversaw data collection and analysis for California's Hillslope Monitoring Program from 1996 through 2002. **(Story on Page 12)**



Allen Edwards

is a life-long tree farmer, and has been the owner/manager of the Edwards Family Tree Farm since 1976. He was California's Tree Farmer of the Year in 2002. Edwards retired from the California Energy Commission as a senior economist. **(Story on Page 14)**



Richard Harris Ph.D.

is an extension forestry specialist at the University of California - Berkeley, a position he has held for 14 years. Dr. Harris conducts extensive research and education projects on the effectiveness of watershed and stream habitat restoration. **(Story on Page 12)**



Jerry Partain

served as director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection from 1983 to 1989. He also served on the Humboldt County planning commission from 1972 to 1978, and was the head of the Humboldt State University forestry department from 1972 to 1983. **(Story on Page 10)**



William Stewart

is chief of CDF's Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP). He has been studying land use changes in California's forests and rangelands for more than 20 years. **(Story on Page 16)**

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Forest Loss and Fragmentation in California

PRIVATE FORESTS COME UNDER SIEGE



The calculus
is fairly simple:
When houses return
more than forests,
forests lose.



By Constance Best

Most Californians who travel the state enjoy landscapes of oak studded hills and conifer swept mountains. Behind this “evergreen” façade, however is a disturbing fact: California is second nationally only to North Carolina in forest loss.

While our state is ever the trendsetter, nationally more forestland is being lost to developed uses than farm or rangeland. The long-term viability of private forests – valued for wood, wildlife, watersheds, and recreation – is being seriously threatened.

Between 1982 and 1997, more than 565,000 forested acres were developed in California. Even more disturbing is that the rate of loss is accelerating: in the five years between 1992 and 1997 more forest was lost than in the 10 years before. More was lost in those 15 years than in the previous 30. Over the next 50 years, the USDA Forest Service projects that California will lose about 20 percent of all non-industrial timberland – about 900,000 acres. This might happen even sooner: owners of 800,000 forestland acres in the West expect to convert their land to non-forest use in the next five years. Most losses will probably be in California.

This outright loss is being compounded by the breakup of larger forest ownerships into smaller parcels. Nationally, for every acre of loss, two more acres are broken into smaller parcels. Smaller properties tend to feature residences and highly fragmented forests that affect wildlife and the ability to produce wood products.

Forest loss is driven by complex forces, with shifting land value chief among them. The calculus is fairly simple: When houses return more than forests, forests lose. Fragmentation

and loss are fueled by California’s continuing building boom and tight housing markets, and historic shifts in forestland ownership that are bringing record acreages to market, compounded by high regulatory costs.

New parcel sources in California mirror national trends: major shifts in industrial forest ownership and huge intergenerational transfers. In the 1990s, 20 million acres changed hands across America in major industrial forestland transactions; more than 5 million acres in 2003 alone. In most large-scale dispositions, 5 - 20 percent of the land is sold for “highest and best use” real estate value and taken out of forest use. Some 100 million forested acres nationwide owned by people over 65 years old are threatened by succession issues such as no heirs, or heirs not inclined to manage the family forest.

Increasing population densities and construction in forest regions impacts individual properties and the broad landscape. For instance, firefighting costs are greater when houses encroach upon forests. More people also tends to mean more conflicts over uses – people want so many things from forests their desires can often be contradictory. Finally, smaller forest properties are expensive to manage as forests, whether to enhance for wildlife, reduce fuel loads or produce wood products. Small forest landowners face daunting hurdles of time and money to address critical stewardship needs.



Unless we raise public awareness of the challenges facing private forests and the fate of their many public benefits we will simply lose them.



Broken ties, broken forests

Underlying these trends is perhaps the greatest threat of all – the broken connection between people and forests. Most Americans don't know that 90 percent of our domestic timber harvest comes from privately owned lands, or that these forests provide wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, recreation and more. Most people don't realize that when private forests are lost, everyone loses. Unless we raise public awareness of the challenges facing private forests – and the fate of their many public benefits – we will simply lose them.

To stem the tide of forest loss and to reassemble a healthy, bountiful forest landscape, we need creative strategies to keep forests intact. We must explore public-private partnerships, provide assistance for smaller forest owners, and encourage market-based incentives to drive conservation. Solutions worth considering include:

- Expanding working forest conservation easements (WFCEs), which are being used across the United States and California to conserve the public benefits of private forests while keeping them in productive use. WFCEs are especially useful in protecting large and medium-sized forest tracts from subdivision and non-forest use while promoting sustainable forestry that enhances habitat, watersheds, and other public benefits. WFCEs

provide direct revenue or tax savings, and compensate forest landowners for their commitment to maintaining forestry as the primary use of their property.

- Streamlining California's notoriously expensive and cumbersome timber harvest permitting process for landowners committed to high standards of environmental protection.
- Expanding state and federal efforts to create market opportunities for large and small logs.
- Encouraging landowner cooperatives so smaller landowners can gain added value in their log sales.
- Establishing a system whereby forest landowners can sell forest-based carbon credits to mitigate global warming.
- Developing markets for other ecosystem services such as water flows.
- Funding expanded stewardship grants to help smaller landowners.

It's time the debate shifted away from the false choices of exploitation vs. preservation. We won't have productive forests without protecting them from fragmentation and conversion. We won't have real protection without keeping privately owned forests economically viable as forests. ■

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Wanted: A New Way to Save Forests

FOCUS SHOULD BE ON RESULTS

Which do California's regulators believe degrades wildlife habitat and poses a greater threat to water quality, fish habitats, and delicate ecosystems — carefully managed forestland, or forestland developed into condos and shopping malls?

By Jerry Partain

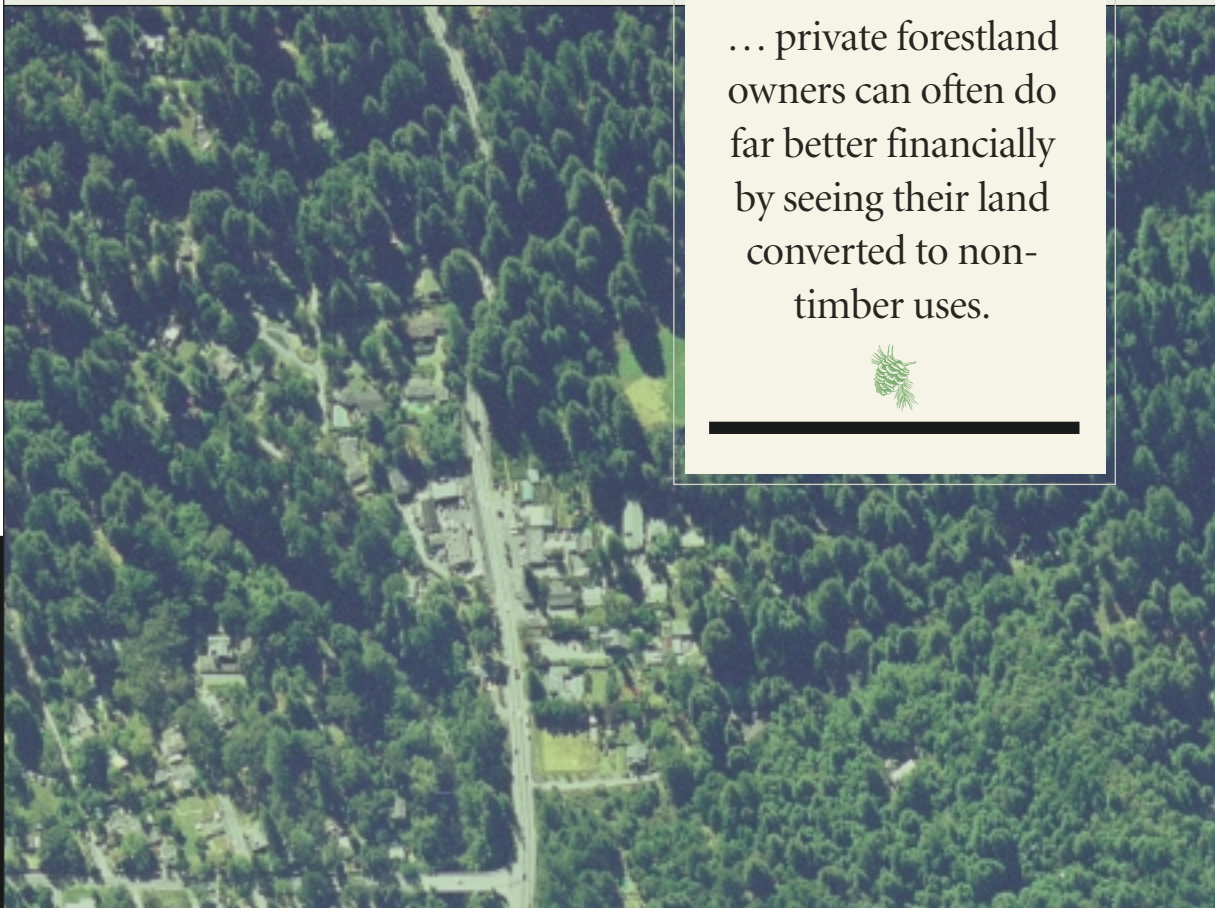
California's ever-increasing demand for wood products is creating an unprecedented need to conserve our forestland at the very same time an important tool for doing just that has outlived its usefulness. With our population booming and forestry regulations getting more costly and complex every year, it's clear the glory days of Timber Production Zoning (TPZ) are gone.

... private forestland owners can often do far better financially by seeing their land converted to non-timber uses.



>>

There must be a regulatory balance that allows forest management companies to sustain their businesses as well as their forests.



TPZ, combined with the Timber Yield Tax, once provided an effective incentive to keep timberland functioning as productive forests. By aligning tax assessments with the value of timber when it is harvested rather than its value while standing, this tax structure effectively deterred forestland owners from selling to developers or converting to other uses.

The system remains in place, with landowners paying the bulk of their tax when they realize a gain from selling harvested trees, and counties benefiting from a relatively stable tax base. Unfortunately, tax incentives alone can no longer offset the crushing economic impact of ever more complex regulations on forestland owners – especially when they can easily accept lucrative offers to abandon their trees. Despite tax incentives, private forestland owners can often do far better financially by seeing their land converted to non-timber uses.

Micromanagement is not stewardship

Last year, a study done by Chris Dicus and Ken Delfino at California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo, found that regulations meant to protect California's forestland are actually increasing the threat of forestland conversion because they have dramatically raised the cost of compliance. They found California's forestry regulations overbearing and inflexible, prone to micromanagement not always best for the forest.

While I could not have foreseen the specifics of our current regulatory scheme when I was director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, I did foresee problems with a system that focused so heavily on prescriptive measures.

Prescriptive regulations – one-size-fits-all rules that dictate when and where foresters can and can't operate – invite a host of trouble. They fail to consider site-specific factors and tie the hands of professional foresters most familiar with the land and available technology. Worst of all, they invite litigation over the details of adherence and focus exclusively on process, not on results.

The regulatory system governing activities on private timberland is now so complex that it has literally become counterproductive. Rules are frequently redundant or conflicting, with multiple agencies claiming jurisdiction. It is entirely possible to follow the rules and still negatively impact the land. Conversely, foresters are often prevented from implementing best management practices they know could better protect their land.

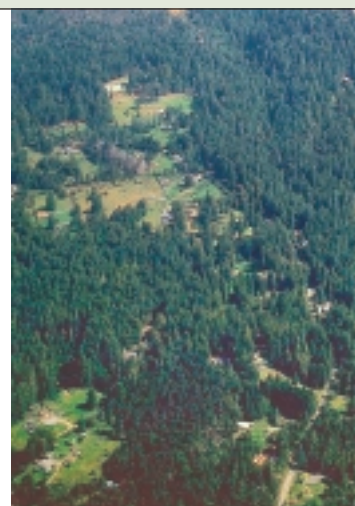
Clearly, we need to get back to basics. We need to focus on protecting soils, water, wildlife, air quality, cultural heritage and other values in the best way possible for each individual site. Even more important, we need to adjust our regulatory regimen so that it protects the environment and allows for the profitable production of wood products. Is it so far-fetched to have the companies that harvest and replant trees do so in an environment that allows sufficient profitability to survive?

Which do California's regulators believe degrades wildlife habitat and poses a greater threat to water quality, fish habitats, and delicate ecosystems – carefully managed forestland, or forestland developed into condos and shopping malls? Because that is the choice we are facing – between allowing foresters to harvest in an environmentally responsible way, or driving them out of business and into the arms of the developers. California's private forestland owners abide by stringent regulations aimed at conserving forest resources. There are no such goals or strict regulations for subdivisions.

Instead of prescriptively micromanaging every aspect of what foresters do on their land, California's regulators should develop a system that focuses on the end result – on keeping soil on the hills and sediments out of streams, ensuring adequate fish passage through forested watersheds, regenerating forests and conserving sensitive species habitats. This system should allow foresters to use the most effective means possible to accomplish these goals. Such a system must retain thorough reviews and harsh consequences for violators, set clear objectives, and utilize efficient planning processes, too.

California's forestry companies now routinely employ wildlife biologists, hydrologists and other scientists. They have among the finest high-tech harvesting equipment in the world, which allows precision harvesting while mitigating potential environmental impact. Why not require foresters to leave behind a healthy, wholesome forest, and let them apply their expertise and full set of tools to accomplish that goal?

When forestry regulations fail to protect the forests or serve the public interest of conserving our state's forestlands, it is government's responsibility to rethink those regulations. Prescriptive regulations have proven inefficient and ineffective. It's time to try something new. Our best chance to keep productive forestland from being converted is to allow a little more freedom into the mix and focus on the end result. ■



When development encroaches upon forestland, the landscape can be changed forever.

When forestry regulations fail to protect the forests or serve the public interest of conserving our state's forestlands, it is government's responsibility to rethink those regulations.

Putting Roads in Perspective

THERE'S A NEW THREAT IN TOWN

By Richard R. Harris, Ph.D., and Peter H. Cafferata

California's forests and watersheds are under a new assault where the rubber meets the road.



As California's forestlands are increasingly broken up into smaller lots, their fragmentation generally means more roads... These residential roads can have a far greater impact on the environment than forest management roads.

There's been a lot of attention on the issue of forest roads and their relationship to sediment delivery to streams. And in recent years, forest management roads have come under increased scrutiny, with amendments to the state's Forest Practice Rules and agencies such as Regional Water Quality Control Boards requiring improved practices.

But as California's forestlands are increasingly broken up into smaller lots, their fragmentation generally means more roads – many of which are neither built nor maintained to the same standards as roads used for timber management.

While it's entirely possible to build environmentally friendly roads in newly developed areas, there is often little public control over road construction on residential parcels. These residential roads can have a far greater impact on the environment than forest management roads.

In an evaluation of watersheds in 1996, for instance, the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) estimated that in a tributary of the Consumnes River watershed southeast of Sacramento, residential roads delivered more than twice the sediment that logging roads did. Another study of a subdivision built in the early 1960s in the Lake Tahoe basin showed that in heavily developed portions of the site, residential roads and associated development increased sedimentation rates by about 10,000 percent over normal.



Fragmented lands need more roads to provide access to more individual parcels. Unfortunately, there is often a connection between more roads on rural subdivided lands and more sediment in streams. Yet the increase in road density doesn't tell the whole story. You must consider, in addition to more roads, less maintenance, all-weather use, and inadequate design to get the complete picture of how problem roads can degrade watersheds. All-weather use of unpaved roads for instance, which is common on residential roads but typically restricted on forest management roads, is associated with chronic sediment delivery to streams.



Reality check: care and upkeep

Inadequate road maintenance can compound the problems of improper design, location, construction and use.

Road maintenance on rural residential and public roads is often problematic. Maintenance is not consistently required on residential roads, and usually depends on individual owners.

Public road maintenance suffers from disconnects between policies and implementation, and has been shown at times to inadvertently introduce adverse environmental impacts. Furthermore, many rural counties are financially strapped and their road maintenance programs under-funded. Too often, maintenance only takes place after a devastating event when Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) money becomes available.



Whereas forest management roads are required to meet high environmental standards (above),  many other roads are not (left). 

Road construction and maintenance on forest management roads, however, is governed by California's Forest Practice Act and Rules, enacted through Timber Harvesting Plans.

Forestland owners often construct roads to higher standards than those built for residential purposes in rural areas. State law requires that forest management roads are built to ensure adequate fish passage, accommodate 100-year storm flows, and eliminate diversion potential should a culverted crossing become plugged.

Development in fragmented land is often not under these regulations, and frequently the roads and watersheds show it. If we are to truly protect our watersheds, we must address roads across all ownerships.

Beyond the gloom

Some coastal counties have taken steps to improve their regulatory controls over rural road construction, but in terms of providing meaningful watershed protection, most have a considerable way to go.

And education, while able to address critical issues through road management workshops like the ones offered statewide by the University of California Cooperative Extension and other entities, ultimately relies on landowner initiative and finances for action on the ground.

Still, some efforts to reduce the impact of roads are underway. The Five County Salmon Conservation program, for instance, has spearheaded sediment assessments and fish barrier removal in the northern coastal counties. Road restoration has become big business on the North Coast. Timber companies are spending millions of dollars annually to storm-proof or decommission roads, sometimes leveraging matching grant funds from the California Department of Fish and Game.

On public lands, the National Park Service has decommissioned some 230 miles of old roads and 990 stream crossings in Redwood National Park in the past 25 years. The Bureau of Land Management is actively decommissioning roads in the Sinkyone Wilderness, the Mattole watershed, the South Fork Eel River basin and the Headwaters Forest Reserve. These are accomplishments to build upon.

Perhaps most importantly, we must recognize a new threat. Fragmentation has changed the playing field, and it stands to increase even further the impact that substandard and poorly maintained roads have on our valuable fish streams and sources of clean drinking water.

As California's forested landscape becomes home to more residential uses on smaller parcels, we must protect watersheds from the impacts of additional roads. Our streams, rivers, and the life they support are at stake. ■

Unfortunately, there is often a connection between more roads on rural subdivided lands and more sediment in streams.



Most importantly, we must recognize a new threat. Fragmentation has changed the playing field.

Uncertainty Paves the Way for Forestland Development

SMALL LANDOWNERS FACE TOUGH CHOICES

By Allen Edwards

In 1993, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection gave me “the last permit you’ll ever need” to harvest trees on the 500 acres of timberland my family has owned for almost 60 years.

Think about it. My land is zoned for timber production. If I’m going to make a living, I have to grow and harvest trees.

Well, it wasn’t. I have needed additional permits every time I have harvested trees since then. I’ll need more permits, from more agencies, in the years ahead. The regulations keep changing, making compliance more expensive and frequently shrinking the area of land that tree farmers like me can harvest.

My family and I have spent tens of thousands of hours nurturing our land in the Sierra Nevada foothills northeast of Sacramento, restoring into productive forestland what had been cut over for railroads and mines. We practice sustainable forestry that keeps our forest healthy, picturesque, and resistant to forest fires.

Yet, the regulatory maze we face adds costs and uncertainty that are pushing other forestland owners toward the “sure thing” of selling out to real estate development – the very thing regulators and “leave-the-forest-alone” protesters don’t want.

Think about it. My land is zoned for timber production. If I’m going to make a living, I have to grow and harvest trees. I’m not trying to get rich quick – growing trees for lumber on a small scale is no formula for that, believe me. Trees only grow in value 2-5 percent a year and take decades to mature.

The uncertainty caused by constantly changing regulations – on top of the natural uncertainties of fire, beetles, drought or disease, and the economic uncertainties of a marketplace

dominated by larger players – makes selling out very tempting, possibly even necessary.

My operation is frequently inspected, held to some of the highest forestry and water quality standards in the world. If I fail to install proper erosion controls or operate machinery too close to the creek, I face crippling fines.

Because I manage my land carefully, when a half-inch of rain falls, the creeks in my forest run clear. On the other hand, in the neighboring city and subdivisions, the creeks run brown.

My neighbors, with up to 20 acres each, can do as they please on their land. They can harvest trees without replanting. They can cut firewood without restriction; can subdivide and build – scraping the earth with road graders and sealing soils with asphalt – with virtually no requirement to protect wildlife or streams.

When neighbors are subject to regulations, it seems they are not always equally enforced.

The city sewage treatment facility on my boundary answers to the same regional water quality control board I do. But public records show the sewage plant has violated its permit conditions hundreds of times in the past few years, including dumping partially treated sewage into creeks. Yet there has been virtually no punishment.

In contrast, I have never violated a permit. Yet I have been subject to any number of delays.





A disconnect between our forests and the products they provide often creates a double standard: "Hand me that 2x4 but don't cut any trees."

Values beyond economics

Why haven't we sold out? Because this land is our home. We love it – that's why we take such good care of it with sustainable forestry. Yet, the many city dwellers that leave the urban life behind to enjoy the pleasures of the forest – without ever having worked in it – constantly cry out against our tree harvesting.

Our neighbors had a true awakening in 2001 when a catastrophic fire ripped through too-thickly forested, unmanaged lands, torched a nearby canyon, and raced toward their homes. It was on our land, thinned through selective logging and protected by our shaded fuel breaks, where the fire crews got the upper hand, saving the homes of the neighbors who protested our harvesting. I lost 100 acres to fire, and 10 acres more to bulldozer lines. But I was glad for the sake of my neighbors' homes. It was only then that some of them began to appreciate the value of good, sustainable forestry.

Uncertainty spells trouble

Our delays go beyond regulations and fire. In 1993, for example, protesters delayed our planned-and-approved harvest by a whole year. Markets shifted, and we lost a lot of money. Small forestland owners like myself all have tales like this to tell.



It's why so much forestland is being developed – there is far more certainty in selling out than in trying to sustain a forest and a family business at the same time. There is certain profit, and certain relief from changing regulations and personal attacks from people who don't understand forestry or natural resource management. There is also certain and permanent environmental change for the worse.

The Sacramento area is growing by leaps and bounds, with new development stretching further into Sierra communities. Until California policymakers start helping small forest land-owners survive, the lure of sure profits will outweigh emotional ties to the land, and doom private forests one small parcel at a time. ■

Yet, the regulatory maze we face adds costs and uncertainty that are pushing other forestland owners toward the "sure thing" of selling out to real estate development – the very thing regulators and "leave-the-forest-alone" protesters don't want.

California's Redwoods at a Crossroads

MODERN PRIORITIES FRAGMENT THE FOREST

By William Stewart

Change is rippling through California's majestic redwood region. It's most visible at night when lights illuminate the many residential parcels carved out of once vast tracts of uninterrupted forestland.

During the 1990s, an additional 50,000 acres of redwood land shifted into the "redwood forest with an understory of houses" category.



It is clear that this is not, as they say, your grandfather's redwood region. New economic drivers are reshaping this land and will continue to exert strong influences on its future. However, perceptions may not be keeping pace with reality.

During the past 25 years, a timber industry based on young growth has emerged, high-tech and re-tooled with computer-driven efficiency. Once-abundant old-growth harvests no longer dominate the economic landscape here. New approaches to conserving fish and wildlife habitats in young-growth forests have shown that forests can be productive and sustainable for timber production, wildlife habitats and watershed protection.

Still, many areas of forests that once were unbroken over vast landscapes are being fragmented, set aside in parks or divvied up into rural residential parcels.

The region is at a crossroads in terms of land use values and practices.

The transition to a young-growth redwood industry is essentially complete. Most major landowners now have forest management plans that incorporate biodiversity and watershed restoration investments. Long-term habitat conservation plans for ownerships are more common. These foundations could bring stability to long-term forestland ownership and management.

However, changes such as decreases in market premiums for redwood products and increases in operating costs relating to California's overlapping regulatory systems may reduce landowner interest in maintaining large areas of expensive real estate in sustainable forest products-based operations.

Real estate markets influence forest development

Already, most of the redwood forests in four areas – much of Santa Cruz County, the Russian River region in Sonoma, the Fort Bragg to Mendocino region of the central Mendocino coast, and the southeast side of Humboldt Bay in Humboldt – now effectively have an understory of houses and associated residential land uses. The environmental impacts of this development in terms of altered wildlife habitats and new sources of water pollutants are significant.

If we are to sustain these forests as we know them today, the social and economic components of sustainability must be acknowledged. We need to foster an environment in which redwood forests and communities can endure.

Current redwood harvests are less than half of what they were 25 years ago. Second-growth harvests, however, have stayed relatively stable

over that time. The vast majority of the decline is reflected in diminished harvests of old growth. With about 97 percent of California's old growth now protected in parks and federal ownerships, old-growth harvests have decreased to the point where the Board of Equalization stopped using different harvest value schedules for old growth in 1999.

Since young-growth harvests appear to remain essentially flat, local economies can expect no significant lift from the natural resource management sector. Nor can they expect a boom from the addition of larger forested parks and recreational tourism that was supposed to offset declines in timber-related opportunities. That has never materialized. In fact, Mendocino, Humboldt, and Del Norte counties have experienced a 14 percent decrease in redwood park visitors since 1990.

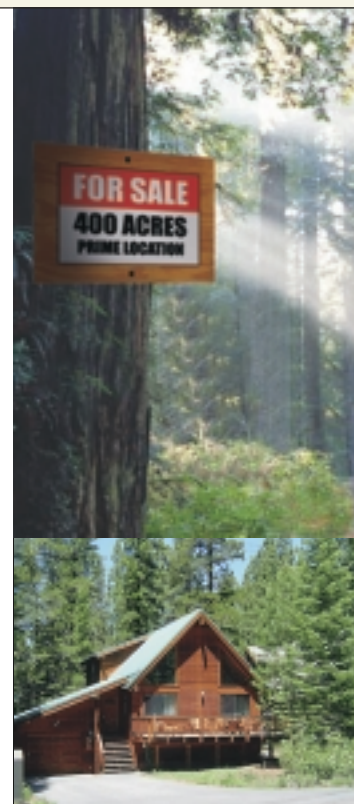
Most redwood parks are too remote to attract the day-use visitors that are increasingly the norm in California. While visits to beaches and

per 40 acres. During the 1990s, an additional 50,000 acres of redwood land shifted into the 'redwood forest with an understory of houses' category. While these housing densities may have little impact on the number of trees per acre, they signify a shift in land use away from unfragmented forest management towards a mix of forest management and residential land use.

Infrastructure is key to retaining forests

While the public clearly values open spaces, the high value of those spaces in areas where residential uses are encroaching on what has traditionally been forest management land now threatens the continuity of forests at the landscape level.

The more forestland is fragmented, the more it falls into the realm of less regulated lot-by-lot residential management. That poses significant risks to these forest ecosystems, watersheds, and wildlife that Californians, and all Americans, value as unique treasures.



1990 to 2000 change in redwood acreage at different housing densities.

	Total Acres	County	Average Parcel Size Based on 2000 Census Block Data				
			>1/40	1/40-1/20	1/20-1/5	1/5-1/1	<1/1
	541,959	Mendocino	(32,223)	32,190	25	0	7
	424,216	Humboldt	(13,504)	11,658	1,502	(554)	897
	114,252	Santa Cruz	0	(12,311)	12,244	(381)	447
	93,482	Sonoma	(3,170)	991	1,611	568	0
	123,501	Others	(54)	(383)	183	242	12
	1,297,410	Total	(48,952)	32,146	15,565	(124)	1,364

⚡ Since 1990 Santa Cruz County has had more than 12,000 acres broken into smaller parcels with homes – a trend other redwood counties stand poised to follow. More and more significant chunks of land are falling into increasingly fragmented and developed categories.

parks near urban locations continue to grow, visits to relatively remote forested parks are declining. The long time residents of counties that are home to more than three quarters of the redwood forests, therefore, are suffering in terms of high unemployment and low household incomes.

What has increased is the amount of redwood forests now home to houses and commercial development. More than 17 percent of the total redwood forest area now has at least one house

Retaining large tracts of forestland would protect the broadest range of public values for the redwood region. For that to happen, a viable forest products industry must be encouraged as part of the solution to sustain the forest.

The alternative is more backyard redwoods, and over time, damaging environmental consequences. ■

The more forestland is fragmented, the more it falls into the realm of less regulated lot-by-lot residential management.

Forestland Conversion Challenges

A VIEW FROM SACRAMENTO

The pressure for timberland conversion to other uses is driven by economics.

Current regulatory processes are contributing to the costs and complexities of owning timberland.



By Dale Geldert

Director, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Conversion of forestland to non-forest uses has been and will continue to be controversial. Any land-use transaction that has the potential to impact our environment – the resources we rely on, the biodiversity we treasure, the scenic majesty that is uniquely Californian – will rightfully garner the attention of a concerned public.

The conversion process is indeed a complex one. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) is the lead agency in most situations, responsible for implementing state laws as defined in the Forest Practice Rules and Z'Berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act. Local jurisdictions also play a role, and may have specific regulations regarding conversion to subdivisions or vineyards.

When timberland is being considered for conversion to other uses, two separate documents must be approved. One is a Timberland Conversion Permit, which is reviewed by CDF's Sacramento office. Additionally, timber on the area to be converted is harvested under a Timber Harvesting Plan reviewed by the appropriate regional office. Both are subject to the California Environmental Quality Act, review by multiple agencies, and open to public comment. Conversion Permits are ultimately approved or disapproved by the CDF director.

In current assessments of timberland conversion practices and policy, several factors that influence forestland conversion decisions have become apparent. CDF is active in providing input to the Board of Forestry as policies regarding timberland conversion issues are considered. This year, our input will include the following:

- Economic considerations. The pressure for timberland conversion to other uses is driven by economics and the desire for the landowner to receive more value for their land under an alternative use. The complexities of global timber markets and declines in California's forest products infrastructure may contribute to these decisions.
- Urban growth influences. The greatest pressures to convert forestland are likely to occur in counties with opportunities for more profitable enterprises and rapidly expanding urban areas that impinge on timberland. California's real estate market and exploding population can create supply and demand pressures that favor non-timberland uses in these areas.



- **Regulatory complexities.** Current regulatory processes, both federal and state, are contributing to the costs and complexities of owning timberland and are acting as a disincentive relative to holding forestland for growing timber over the long term.
- **Infrastructure loss.** Loss of forest products manufacturing infrastructure in the state and competition from out-of-state suppliers will mean there are fewer purchasers for logs. At the same time, these conditions will create lower prices for finished wood products.
- **County ordinances.** Counties will continue to exert more pressure on conversions through the adoption of local ordinances.

Acting on what we can control

Market dynamics, global competition and other influences that can pressure landowners to consider converting their timberlands to other uses remain beyond our immediate control.

However, insofar as we can, CDF is committed to working with the Board of Forestry to reduce the pressures these landowners feel. We will, for instance, work collaboratively to:

- Examine ways to provide forestland owners meaningful relief from paperwork and permitting costs while continuing to provide for high standards of environmental protection. We will also seek ways to develop a “one-stop” permitting process, minimize redundancy, and reduce the need to secure permits from individual agencies.
- Develop ways to provide incentives to landowners to maintain their lands as timberland, including programs that provide landowners market-based compensation.
- Encourage development of a market-based hardwood and biomass manufacturing/ utilization infrastructure that would expand the range of resources with commercial value, contribute to forest health, and reduce the risk of catastrophic fire.
- Encourage counties to fully participate in the review process and maximize incorporation of mitigations into project documents to address county concerns.

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Californians stand
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Forestland Conversion Challenges

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Californians stand to realize certain values in having large tracts of forestland remain in tact as forestland. We must strike a balance in our land use and management practices that conserves our renewable natural resources. It is in that spirit that I envision CDF helping to craft policies and implement strategies to encourage forestland owners to practice exemplary stewardship and manage their lands as working forests.

We will work diligently to reduce the pressures to convert productive forestland to other uses so that generations of Californians to come have ample opportunities to enjoy natural landscapes abundant with diverse wildlife, clean water and healthy forests. Through these efforts we hope to foster in all Californians a meaningful connection with the natural resources with which we have been entrusted. ■

We will seek ways
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Harvesting Trees to Protect Communities

FOCUS ON STEWARDSHIP REDUCES WILDFIRE RISK

By Doug LaMalfa, Calif. Assemblyman [R-Richvale]

California's Legislature recently passed landmark legislation that protects communities from staggering wildfire danger, promotes forest health, and shows we can make real progress when common sense, good will, and perseverance prevail.

The Forest Fire Protection Act of 2004, a historic breakthrough in an area that has been marked for decades by bitter confrontations over how to care for California's forests, awaits Governor Schwarzenegger's signature.

Wildfires today spread more rapidly, take more lives, destroy more property, and turn more forests into charred wastelands than historic fires ever did. A major reason for the growing danger is this simple fact: our forests are vastly overgrown, choked with dead and diseased trees. Last fall, for example, the fires that raged out of control in the San Bernardino National Forest feasted on a forest clogged with 500 trees per acre where 50 per acre stood a century ago.

The new law cuts through the legislative logjam over forest fire protection by creating an exemption to allow private owners to thin fire-prone forestland. This relieves them of the costly burden of filing a Timber Harvest Plan required in commercial timber harvesting. Those plans can be 500 pages long, cost tens of thousands of dollars to complete, and stymie landowner efforts to protect their homes and property.

The Act protects forests and people with a balanced approach to forest management that reduces the threat of catastrophic fires. It limits each forest thinning project to no more than 300 acres, and targets the "ladder fuels" that lead to extraordinarily destructive crown fires with

flames that leap from treetop to treetop. It also acknowledges that there must be an economic incentive for landowners to clean up the forest, and provides California's forest products industry with a cost-effective path to continuing their leadership in good forest management and sustaining healthy forests.

When forests are thinned, a more fire-resistant landscape that gives trees more access to sunlight, nutrients and water is created. These forests mimic California's historic forests, which featured a mosaic of trees of all sizes and ages with meadows and openings that helped prevent the spread of monster fires that have become all too common today.

Clearly, we must take care of our forests and their inhabitants. The Act provides the basis to protect communities and the forest values Californians hold dear – clean water and air, high-quality wood products, diverse wildlife habitat, scenic landscapes – in part by acknowledging that forest care requires specialized expertise. By alleviating some of the cost burden that forestry professionals face yet maintaining the world-class environmental protections Californians expect, our forests and communities will see a healthier tomorrow.

Continued on Page 22



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Harvesting Trees to Protect Communities

Continued from Page 21

Broad support broadsided

The Act takes a balanced approach to forest management activities that allowed traditional adversaries to find common ground. It had the support of the Sierra Club, which accepted the need to harvest trees, as well as forest landowners, who accepted certain restrictions on that harvesting.

Armed with broad support, the Act sailed through two Assembly committees, the full Assembly and two Senate committees without a single "no" vote.

Then a funny thing happened on the way to Governor Schwarzenegger's desk. Just two weeks before the end of the legislative session, AB 2420 was amended to include an entirely separate bill, a draconian anti-logging measure entirely unrelated to fire protection. This amendment threatened to kill the Forest Fire Protection Act, and leave our forests and thousands of people at the mercy of wildfires.

Suddenly we had slipped into a time warp, back into the bad, old era of ideological gamesmanship and confrontation. The amendment supposedly protected old trees not threatened by the original bill and already protected by California law.

More wildfires in the Sierra Nevada foothills and hours of passionate debate ultimately convinced the legislature of the importance to restore the bill to its original form.

During the waning hours of the 2004 legislative session, the amendment was removed and, on votes of 28 to 0 in the Senate, and 79 to 0 in the Assembly, the Forest Fire Protection Act of 2004 won final approval.

We should look forward to more victories for common sense and good will in the future. If we search for workable solutions not endless arguments, we can find common ground while staying faithful to our principles. Building on what we've accomplished by working together, we can protect communities and sustain our forests for generations to enjoy. ■

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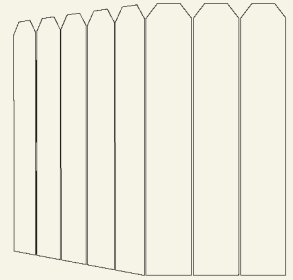
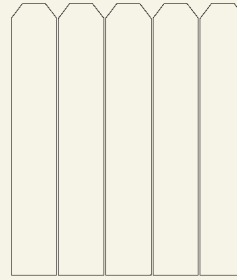
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An aerial photograph showing a dense forest of green trees. A small town or village is visible, with several buildings and roads winding through the forest. The town is located in the lower-left quadrant of the image. The forest covers the majority of the area, with some cleared patches and roads visible.

Sustainable Forestry Threatened in California

California's booming population and cumbersome forest management regulations are putting extreme pressure on forestland owners to convert their land to non-forest uses. As a result, California's forests are becoming increasingly fragmented and developed. To stop that trend, we must work together to develop policies that encourage landowners to sustain their forests, and provide the wood products, diverse wildlife habitat, protected watersheds, and beautiful landscapes that Californians value so dearly.

Photo by California Department of Water Resources taken north of Santa Cruz.